United Nations E/CN.6/2004/NGO/30

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 January 2004

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Forty-eighth session
1-12 March 2004
Item 3 (c) (ii) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace in the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building

Statement submitted by National Alliance of Women's Organizations, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2004/1.

04-21339 (E) 110204

Women have been ignored and marginalized throughout history. It is only recently, and with the help of CEDAW, the UN's international series of conferences, *Equality, Development and Peace,* resulting in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome Document of the Special Meeting in 2000 of the General Assembly, CSW, women's NGOs and some governments that gender mainstreaming has become a central and widely accepted concept. The UN has repeatedly agreed that it will mainstream gender into all its own functioning and demand its application in its programmes. Sadly, women are still largely absent from decision-making in relation especially to war and peace and gender mainstreaming remains an ideal and not standard practice.

War and conflict internationally and internally is decided by and carried out by men while women suffer disproportionately from the consequences. For the most part women are left out of the decision making involving conflict prevention, alternatives to war, conflict management, conflict resolution and peace building. We do not have to look far to see examples where women have been marginalized: Rwanda, Afghanistan and Iraq come to mind.

Men in power, who also have the capacity to act in a supportive role to women, often hide behind the excuse of cultural sensitivity to hide the failure to consult and include women in a meaningful way. This is a mask for the avoidance of women's access to their human rights.

In the year 2000, the Security Council with resolution 1325 finally and unanimously recognized that in this vital area women have an important role to play. However, there has been poor implementation on the ground.

NAWO's membership of over 100 women's organizations headquartered in England is unanimously committed to the furtherance of gender mainstreaming through application of tools developed in many parts of the world to policy-making and implementation and through education and awareness. Our member organizations and individuals look to using all available methodologies to promote this goal, not only at home but also throughout the world.

We are a partner organization to the Women's National Commission, the advisory body to government in the UK on women, and a member of the European Women's Lobby. We use these platforms to lobby our government and to lobby internationally for equality of women and men. This includes all aspects on women's empowerment and the important participation of women in peace keeping and decision making.

It is only recently with the ICC that the particular acts demonstrating the vulnerability of women in places of war and conflict have been formally recognized as crimes. Rape is no longer viewed as an acceptable consequence of war. But it is only through the participation of women in peacemaking, and protection in their role as vital witnesses in post-conflict war crimes tribunals, that other women will feel safe enough to confront their oppressors. It is only women who will recognize and identify the oppressors as well as the most vulnerable victims, those who have lost their husbands and fathers and those who have been brutalized in the name of who knows what.

Resolution 1325 is filled with fine words and aspirations that could and should lead to the equal participation of women in all areas of decision making. It is only through a serious and thorough application of gender mainstreaming that women will become normally accepted and equal partners in all processes and the dignity of humanity will progress.